



*News From The ...*

## **COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

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### **VA Disability Ratings Evaluated**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**—Today, the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs (DAMA) held an oversight hearing to evaluate if the current disability rating systems at the Departments of Defense (DoD) and Veterans Affairs (VA) are best serving America's veterans, or if the systems are outdated and need to be updated to reflect today's veterans' population.

The claims backlog and rating system is one of the most common complaints made by veterans about VA. VA currently has a backlog of more than 886,000 claims, with 66 percent of claims facing more than 120 days to process, up from 389,000 in 2009.

“Although select portions of the ratings system have been updated throughout the last 20 years, many cite the system as ‘outdated,’ and note that the system has not been comprehensively revised since the conclusion of World War II,” stated Rep. Jon Runyan, Subcommittee Chairman of DAMA.

The Subcommittee questioned witnesses on the differences between DoD and VA ratings systems, ratings that are often in direct conflict with each other, causing confusion for the veteran. In addition, the Members of the Subcommittee asked if DoD and VA planned to standardize the ratings system to equalize physical and mental injuries.

“The fact of the matter is veterans still don't have a seamless transition. Veterans are getting stuck in the system between the bureaucracy of DoD and VA,” Runyan said. “While VA seems to be making some progress in updating the schedule, it will take continued oversight to ensure it is completed. Just as we would not issue World War II equipment and weapons to our current soldiers and Marines and expect them to be successful on the modern battlefield; we should not be satisfied with a World War II era-based system for evaluating and rating their disabilities as a result of their service and sacrifice to this Nation.”

The House of Representatives passed legislation last year to begin to reform the system, including moving toward a paperless claim submission process and retraining for claims specialists. Today's hearing is the first of the second session in which the Committee will look at the recommendations of the [2007 Dole Shalala Commission](#) and numerous other reports and studies from the past three decades to determine if the transition from DoD to VA is being conducted in a way that will ensure the greater access for our veterans to the care and benefits with the least red tape and greatest efficiency.

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